

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## President Obama Condemns “Outrageous” Moscow Attack

By MacKenzie C. Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington – President Obama strongly condemned the bombing of Moscow’s busiest airport, calling the attack an “outrageous act of terrorism against the Russian people.”

“I want to express the solidarity of the American people with the Russian people in the aftermath of this premeditated attack against innocent civilians. Michelle and I offer our deepest condolences to the Russian people, who have suffered greatly at the hands of terrorism,” Obama said in a statement January 24 delivered by White House spokesman Robert Gibbs.

Russian news sources report at least 35 people were killed and more than 152 wounded in the attack on Domodedovo Airport January 24.

“Our thoughts are with the families of the victims and we are praying for a successful recovery for all of those who were injured,” Obama said.

Gibbs added the United States stands ready to provide “any assistance that the government of Russia needs or wants.”

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said the bombing was a terror attack, and according to the RIA Novosti state news agency, law enforcement officials suspect the explosion was caused by a suicide bomber. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

Medvedev called for “every investigative action” to be taken to “quickly collect evidence and ... accomplish the investigation,” according to a statement on Medvedev’s website. He said he has increased security at airports and other transport hubs across the country.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton offered her sympathy and support to Russians “in this moment of sorrow.”

“The United States condemns terrorism and all forms of violence against the innocent, wherever it occurs. We stand with the victims of these crimes and we will continue to work with the international community to combat violent extremism that threatens peace-loving people everywhere,” she said in a January 24 statement.

Clinton said the United States “remains ready to support the Russian government as it seeks to bring these perpetrators to justice.”

## U.S. Supports Tunisia’s Political Transition

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration supports Tunisia’s democratic transition following the ouster of former President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali while “recognizing that this is a Tunisian-initiated and Tunisian-led process,” State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said.

“We support the transition that is under way. And we hope that this transition will be peaceful,” Crowley told reporters in Washington January 24.

He said Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman had arrived in the country earlier in the day for meetings with officials in Tunisia’s transitional government, political party leaders and civil society advocates.

Feltman is there to “convey U.S. support to the Tunisian people,” as well as assess where Tunisia is in its transition and “how the United States can help,” Crowley said.

He said the Obama administration could be helpful in providing support and preparations for Tunisia’s upcoming elections through American nongovernmental organizations that have helped other countries that did not have prior histories of allowing a free and fair process.

Tunisian Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi has called for open and credible elections in the coming six months, and Crowley said the vote “will be vitally important” and that the United States is willing to offer its expertise.

“The U.S. can be a constructive partner as Tunisia charts the course forward, including greater political and social freedom, work to achieve transparent, credible and timely elections, as well as its government addressing the underlying political and economic grievances that led to the recent unrest,” Crowley said.

He acknowledged that after “decades of mistrust,” many Tunisians continue to protest the country’s leadership and have “questions about the nature of the government” following Ben Ali’s departure January 14.

The interim government is “trying to be responsive,” and Crowley urged it to “continue to open up a dialogue with and respond to the aspirations of its people.”

He said U.S. officials in Tunisia had expressed their concerns over the temporary shutdown of the independent Hannibal TV network January 23, and said the government “reversed its action after a few hours.”

"This is a government that is trying hard to respond to the aspirations of its people," Crowley said. "We know that this is hard, and we know that the government will at times ... have missteps along the way."

The United States is encouraged by positive steps it has taken, such as allowing space for political parties, opening a dialogue with Tunisian civil society, releasing prisoners, and allowing free media to cover developing events. Crowley said there is "a lot of work to be done" and said the government needs to continue responding to popular demands.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton telephoned Prime Minister Ghannouchi on January 22 to "express continued support for the people of Tunisia in their path to a more democratic society," according to a January 23 State Department release.

"The United States is encouraged by indications that the interim government is trying to be inclusive and ensure that the many segments of Tunisian society will have a voice," she told Ghannouchi, and she noted the prime minister's call for "open, free and credible elections in six months."

In her call, Clinton also commended the government's "first, but significant steps to begin to investigate corruption and past abuses, and to work toward political reform," specifically through its recent establishment of three investigatory committees tasked with addressing those issues.

"The United States stands ready to assist the Tunisian people to meet the challenges ahead, and ... will stand with them as they chart a new course for their country," Clinton said, according to the release.

### **Clean Energy for the Empire State Building**

By Karin Rives  
Staff Writer

Washington — The Empire State Building on New York's Manhattan Island is an architectural icon. It also happens to be one of America's biggest "green building" success stories.

After a two-year, \$20 million building retrofit that cut the Empire State Building's energy consumption by 38 percent, property managers recently signed a contract to purchase all electricity for the building from a company that offers only renewable energy. The two-year contract covers about 55 million kilowatt hours of wind power annually while cutting carbon dioxide emissions by almost 45 million kilos.

And yet, Malkin Holdings, the company managing the

Empire State Building, doesn't pay a premium for the electricity.

"The clean energy provider bid against all providers, not just clean," Anthony Malkin, the company's president, told America.gov. "They were the low-cost provider."

Green Mountain Energy Co., the supplier of the power and one of the leading retailers of renewable energy in the United States, said the power deal is its largest to date.

"This demonstrates that Green Mountain can serve all sizes of commercial customers with renewable energy at a price they can afford, and that green doesn't have to be a trade-off," Paul Thomas, Green Mountain's chief executive, said when the deal was announced.

Costs for renewable energy have dropped in recent years, especially with the infusion of U.S. government subsidies for renewable energy. Historically, subsidies for producers of energy from fossil fuel sources dwarfed the public money invested in renewables, but that imbalance is beginning to level out.

At the G20 summit held in the South Korean capital of Seoul in November 2010, the United States and other member nations reaffirmed their commitment to phase out all subsidies for fossil fuels by 2020. Worldwide, fossil fuel subsidies reached \$312 billion in 2009, compared with \$57 billion in subsidies for renewables, according to the International Energy Agency.

### **POWER MIXES IN THE GRID**

Because electrons produced by, say, a wind station, get mixed in the grid with those produced by a coal plant, there's no way for the Empire State Building or any other consumer to buy purely renewable power.

So Malkin Holdings purchased a renewable energy certificate that requires Green Mountain to add wind-generated power to the U.S. power grid that equals the amount of energy that the building uses. It's an increasingly popular way for companies to voluntarily address carbon dioxide emissions caused by electricity production and consumption.

Towering over all other buildings in central New York City, the Empire State Building has 102 floors to heat and cool and countless lights and computers to power up every day. Commercial tenants in the building are mindful of their energy costs, which makes the recent building efficiency work and the green energy good selling points, Malkin said.

"They see it as both a chance to reduce their costs and to fulfill mandates to make less of an environmental

impact," he said.

Tenants also benefit from happier and more productive employees, he said. Under the retrofit, more than 6,500 windows were replaced to provide better natural light and insulation. This has been popular with workers who now enjoy a healthier office environment, Malkin said.

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